

Visions of Hope

March 11, 2018



F4356 State Hwy 97
Edgar, WI 54426

Mission Statement:

Hope's Mission is to teach the Bible and follow Christ's example by giving back to the community and those in need

Website:

hope4centralwi.com

Sunday Worship
9:30 am

Sunday School
8:45-9:30 am

Communion
1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

Pastor:

Mark Reiff

pastorreiff.hopechurch@gmail.com

920-634-1246 (cell)
715-352-2555 (church)

Secretary:

hopelcsec@gmail.com

Duties List

March 18

March 25

Ushers

Brian Remus
Lowell Borchardt

Rick Bradley
Leroy Syring

Greeters

Brian Remus
Leroy Syring & Beth Leffel

Readers

Kylie, Reagan, Hayley
Jerry Anderson

Acolyte

Hayley Schreiber
Korbyn Bauman



When he had finished speaking he knelt down with them and prayed. By now they were all in tears; they put their arms around Paul's neck and kissed him; what saddened them most was his saying they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship." Acts 20:36-38

These words are the conclusion to the Apostle Paul's farewell address to the elders and to the church that he founded in Ephesus. It is a very emotional farewell as he returns to Jerusalem. In that holy city he will be arrested, eventually sent to Rome for trial. In Rome he will face a martyr's execution. He knew he would never see the people of Ephesus, whom he loved, again.

Paul's speech that day was powerful and poignant. It is a speech worth reading this very day (Acts 20:17-38) as I bid you farewell and God's speed. It is a speech that is filled with divine wisdom for the fledgling church and to us in rural Edgar.

He makes at least three very important points that are valid to the Church in every time and every place. One: "Life to me is not a thing to waste words on, provided that when I finish my race I have carried out the mission the Lord Jesus gave me – and that was to bear witness to the Good News of God's grace." Think about that for a moment; that was not only Paul's mission and race but it is our mission and race as well.

Hope Lutheran Church is called, like the Apostle Paul, to run the race and bear witness to the world around us in these dark and benighted times. You are called and commissioned to speak the Good News of God's grace to the wounded and hurting world and to the wounded and hurting people who live it. It is an urgent message of hope for Hope Lutheran to share with our hopeless world.

Two: Be on your guard...fierce wolves will invade you...coming forth with a travesty of truth on their lips." The western Church has had it so very easy for so many years. It has let its guard down and is easy prey for false teachers and for false teaching. What is it that scripture tells us about "itching ears" hearing what they want to hear.

As you consider a future pastor look for a leader who will be fearless and faithful in teaching the scriptures and especially the teachings of Jesus. Studying the scriptures, listen to them, pray over them, and ask for God's wisdom and guidance. Especially pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your church and in your own lives. Let God's light and love, revealed in Jesus Christ, always be your beacon of Hope.

Three: "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving." Hope Lutheran is a very giving church. I have witnessed firsthand your generosity in giving to others – especially those in this community who are in need. Never forget your own need to be missional. Jesus said that it is in giving that we receive. God has blessed this church with so many talented people who have a wide variety of gifts.

These gifts are not in competition with one another but are complimentary to one another. Never forget that! You are stronger together as the body than you are as separate individuals. It is this body that will find more happiness in giving, in being missional, than in receiving. It is in this kind of giving that you will find God's blessing and your life.

Finally, I pray, that as we enter into an unknown future and go our different paths, that God will always be with us as your guide, your peace, your hope, and your strength. As the High Priest Aaron blessed the people in the desert so now I bless you:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon and be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up his countenance and grant you peace.*

Pax Christi,
Mark Reiff+

"Then Jesus told him, 'because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'." John 20:29

Faith is kind of like navigating a row boat. In a row boat the rower faces the opposite way he is heading. He rows with his back toward the destination. So it is with our faith in spiritual matters. We do not see or touch forgiveness as we might see or touch an object. Rather, we trust that forgiveness is real and that the God, who has shown himself to be loving toward us, is in fact, a God of love.

The real test of faith, believing without seeing, is in our actions. It is easy to say that we believe that Christ Jesus is our Savior, but it is harder to live like we do. It is sort of like getting on a plane. Saying we believe the plane will get us from point "A" to point "B" is a lot less convincing than actually getting on the plane and taking the trip.

This airplane illustration works in another way also. The plane, while sitting on the ground may look flight worthy. But the real test of whether it is flight worth takes place when it is the air. So it is with faith. We all have faith in something. We all put our trust somewhere. The question is if we are putting our trust in anything worthy of our trust. Faith is not something we can see. There is no visual evidence. The official definition of faith is a "firm belief in something of which there is no proof." Faith requires that we believe, despite not having any visual proof.

There is one object that I am sure is worthy of our trust. It takes believing without seeing, but Christ shows Himself true to those who follow Him. A lot of people fall into the trap of placing their trust in lesser things. To trust in our possessions is easy, because we can see them. They are right there before our eyes. But to trust Christ takes faith and faith in Christ requires believing without seeing. But that is where true faith comes in. Faith that is not swayed by new ideas, impressive people, or eloquent preaching. Faith that will not die because something easier comes along. Faith that is based on the belief that He was, is and will be the Savior of the world. Faith that can withstand the pressure of difficulties in life.

If you struggle with believing without seeing there are some tangible helps that God has graciously given to us to aid us in our faith. The Bible is a great help to us. Prayer, hearing God's Word preached, enjoying the fellowship of other believers are all great advantages to us. These make believing without seeing easier. They have been given to us by God for our benefit and He is wise in all He does. Faith only comes by hearing God's Word, and believing it - no matter what - without a shadow of a doubt - without needing constant visual proof. The cold hard fact is that we live in a world that thrives on proof. As a result, Christians will face pressure to doubt that God is real and alive. We will face opportunities to turn away from God and believe in other religions, which may seem trendier, more appealing or visually legitimate. We will face ridicule for believing in the unseen.

If you think about it, we believe without seeing every day. We listen to the news on the radio or television and believe what they say is true. Even though we may see the broadcast, we did not actually witness the events. We listen to the gossip of others and believe their words to be fact. However, when it comes to believing that God is God, and that the Bible is holy and true, many people struggle. Why is it that we have a much harder time believing in a sovereign God, than we do a story on the news or from a friend? Why is it difficult for some to comprehend and believe that God created the universe, is in control of everything, and ordains life?

Doubt is an incredibly powerful weapon that the devil uses to attack the minds of those whose faith is weakened due to struggles in life, feeling distanced from God, or who have never truly known the Savior. Doubt occurs when we begin to think we have to see God to believe in Him, and when our faith is dependent on what our eyes can see. If you have felt lured to doubt God's presence, power, and omnipotence as a result of listening to false teachings, being persuaded by others, or dealing with doubts that have been planted in your mind by those who don't believe because they cannot see, pray for God to remove those doubts today.

If you have been doubting God's existence because you cannot see His activity in your life, pray for Him to open your eyes to see His divine intervention. Pray for Him to saturate your life so powerfully that you cannot doubt that He is at work. Pray for Him to make His presence known to you.

If seeing were believing, then faith would be irrelevant and unnecessary. Jesus would forever be trying to convince us that He is the Holy One through signs, wonders and miracles, we would constantly require proof, just like Thomas. Our faith would always be teetering on the edge, and likely disappear as soon as we felt the need to see just one more example of proof of His existence, His sovereignty, or His power. If we could see Him, we would probably never truly believe in Him. Not all of us will have that "Aha" moment like Thomas did. Most of us will just trust and believe because we do have that strong faith in things unseen.

Hebrews 11:1 says, *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"*

We can't see God, but we can see His activity in our lives...if we believe.

We can't see God, but we can see His power working within us...if we believe.

We see what we want to see. We choose to believe...and then, we see.

If your heart desires to believe, your eyes will see the truth. Your faith will open your eyes to see.

Your servant in Christ
Rosie Schilling

Hope's Happenings

Sunday: March 7 Attendance 45
 Offering: Regular \$295.00
 Total \$295.00

Sunday: March 11 Attendance 109
 Offering: Regular \$1935.00
 Sunday School 7.00
 Loose \$40.00
 New Worship Center \$185.00
 Mission \$10.00
 Total \$2177.00

PRAYER CONCERNS: Please remember the following people in your prayers



John Hamann—hip surgery on March 29—infection in right hip
 Dorothy—rehab in Rhineland—Bonnie’s mom
 Vicky—ovarian growth—friend of the Streckert’s
 Brian—cancer—friend of Leroy and Beth Syring
 Jim Krause—open heart surgery—Jodi’s father in law
 Brian Asplund—cancer
 Bob Kudingo—stem cell replacement—Rose Schilling’s foster brother
 Dennis Woik—cancer—friend of Chad Bender
 Marge Manecke—health issues
 Corinne Kane—friend of Cassi Bauman
 Linda Krahn—breast cancer—sister in law to the Kamenick’s
 Mildred Imhoff—chemo treatment—Ken’s mother
 Grace Schraufnagel—cancer—friend of the Streckert’s
 Shyra Martyn—breast cancer—Randy and Sara’s daughter-in-law
 Don Hanson—health issues
 Leroy Syring—recovering from a stroke
 Bill Brayton—DeEtta Peterson’s brother
 Dylan & Logan Weichelt—sons of Bryan & Stacey
 Sawyer Mueller—microcephaly—Daryl & Beth’s son
 Jennifer Bohman—prayers of healing

The Bulletin Board

- **Mission Money**—Olivia Klimpke—fire; Kaitlyn Belanger and Katelyn Krause—Mission trips; Baby’s Basket of Love; El Salvador; Future new worship fund
- **Wednesday, March 14,**
 - 2:00 pm Bible Study
 - 5:30-6:45 pm Confirmation—this is for ALL youth
A light supper will be provided
 - 7:00 pm Lenten Services
- **Saturday, March 17,**
 - 10:00 am Adult Instrument Easter practice
- **Sunday, March 18, First Communion for 5th graders**
 - Adult Choir practice after worship



Children’s Choir will be practicing Sunday, March 18 and 25, 8:30-8:45. They are planning on singing on Palm Sunday, March 25.

Hope's Happenings



March is the time for collecting health items to fill our kits sent out in the fall. If you would like to donate any of the following items needed to aid us in making the LWR Personal Care Kits, please leave them in the tote by the coffee area. Kits mean so much to people who have lost everything in a disaster or who left all they have behind to escape violence, many who are now living in refugee camps. We will be collecting the following items: Lightweight bath size towels (20"x40" or 52"x 27"); Bath size bars of soap, any brand (NO mini or hotel size bars); Adult-size toothbrushes; Sturdy, tough combs (NO picks or fine toothed combs); metal nail clippers. This year Thrivent is assisting us with costs in purchasing items. Please sign your name and address on the sheet by the tote if helping by bringing in items so they can see how many people were involved with this mission project. Any questions, please talk to Carol Anderson.



We have set up a new building fund, it is called "New Worship Fund". If you would like to donate to this fund please mark on your envelope 'New Worship Fund'. This is different from the building fund so please specify.

Forest Springs Camp is having a Women's Retreat on April 27-28. This is the 5th Annual Women of the Word retreat Sponsored by LCMC Wisconsin Upper Peninsula District. Registration deadline is March 30 and all info about speakers, sessions, cost, etc. is in a pamphlet under the back bulletin board. Direct questions to Rosie Bauman.

Katelyn Krause is hoping to go on a Mission Trip to North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina this summer from May 23rd through August 4th. This mission trip is run through Campus Crusade for Christ and has a price tag on it of about \$3,350. This mission trip is to strengthen leadership skills so students can become more comfortable with sharing the gospel with people they interact with, even strangers. They are trained by experienced staff and they will go to the beach at least three times per week to share the gospel with others. The goal is to spread God's word and bring people who may not know God personally to develop a relationship with Him. There is more information about the goal of the mission and how you can support the trip at the <https://give.cru.org/0973550> support page. Also, if you are able to support and would rather send a check or cash to the following address.... 1000 Edgewood College Dr. Madison, WI 53711, every little bit helps. This is a great opportunity for the congregation to be a part of God's plan for this summer. If they help send Katelyn this summer, and she brings someone closer to Christ, then you can be a part of that as well. Katelyn is also planning on coming back after the trip to share with us her experiences on the trip. Please consider supporting Katelyn and her trip.